

ACSI® Federal Government Study 2026

October 20, 2026



American Customer
Satisfaction Index



Citizen Satisfaction With the Federal Government Declines for the First Time in Five Years

Citizen satisfaction with U.S. federal government services falls 2.6% to an American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) score of 68.6 (out of 100), ending four consecutive years of improvement. All four satisfaction drivers, most departments and agencies, and both digital and traditional service channels post lower scores.

The federal government underwent significant operational and workforce changes during fiscal year 2026. Under the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) initiative — an 18-month effort that ran from January 2025 through July 2026 — agencies navigated organizational restructuring and deep staffing reductions. The federal workforce shed approximately 385,000 employees in the year ending January 2026, and those reductions surface throughout the study in weakened customer service, complaint handling, process efficiency, and website scores. Yet the Department of State's online passport renewal program demonstrates that strong citizen experiences remain achievable even during institutional transition.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

68.6 ▼ -2.6%

ACSI results are based on surveys conducted throughout the federal fiscal year ending in September 2026. ACSI scores are reported on a 0 to 100 scale.

Key Takeaways

- Citizen satisfaction is down 2.6% to an ACSI score of 68.6, the first decline since 2021.
- The Department of State leads all departments at 77, up 3%, on the strength of the Bureau of Consular Affairs' online passport renewal system.
- The Small Business Administration posts the steepest decline in the study, down 9% to 67, after a year of agency-wide restructuring and a 43% workforce reduction.
- Customer service is down 4% to 74, the largest drop among the four satisfaction drivers. Complaint handling is down 7% to 65 despite a stable complaint rate.
- Satisfaction is lower across all three major political affiliations. Republicans (72), Democrats (70), and Independents (65) each score below their 2025 levels.

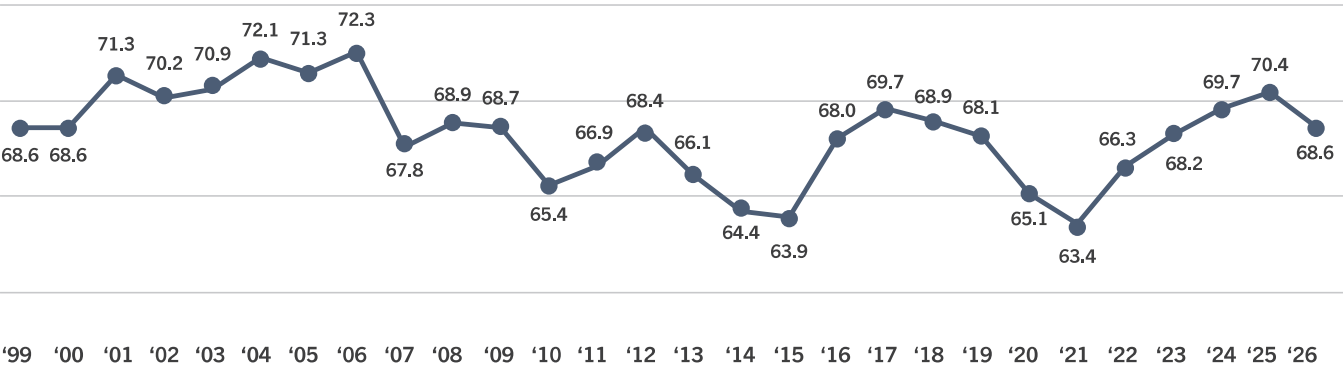
Study Findings

Citizen satisfaction with the U.S. federal government is at an ACSI score of 68.6 this year, down from 70.4 in 2025.

The 2026 study includes assessment of satisfaction results for the designated High Impact Service Providers (HISPs).

AMERICAN CUSTOMER SATISFACTION INDEX CITIZEN SATISFACTION WITH FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES 1999-2026

ACSI (0-100 Scale)



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Citizen Satisfaction With High Impact Service Providers

Among the 15 reported departments/independent agencies, only two improve year over year.

The Department of State leads all agencies at 77, up 3%, while the General Services Administration is up 1% to 73. Three departments — Commerce (71), Veterans Affairs (71), and Treasury hold steady (63) — and the remaining 10 decline.

The Department of State's gain is tied to Passport Services, the specific HISP measured within the department. The Bureau of Consular Affairs' online renewal program cut the process from approximately 40 minutes on paper to 10 minutes online, and more than half of all passport renewals are now completed digitally. The program's four-year development effort also reduced photo upload errors by nearly 50% and eliminated one of the most common friction points for applicants.

The Small Business Administration (SBA) posts the largest year-over-year decline, down 9% to 67. In the 2025 report, the agency stood out for its above-average performance. Its One Platform Expansion — a comprehensive digital system — had cut loan processing times for non-complex loans under \$500K from 10 days to four. But the agencywide reorganization announced last year, paired with a workforce reduction of approximately 43%, appears to have offset those gains. Enhanced fraud-prevention controls and elevated customer expectations during a period of organizational change may have further contributed.

The Department of Agriculture posts the second-largest decline, down 5% to 73. Last year's top-scoring department faces many of the same headwinds as the SBA. The agency entered the year with 20% fewer staff than the prior year, with further reductions expected as a significant number of employees face relocation. Changes to SNAP and nutritional benefit programs and reduced access to local agency offices compound the staffing pressures.

The Department of Health and Human Services is down 4% to 67, and the Department of War (Department of Defense) is also down 4% to 69. The Department of the Treasury remains the lowest-scoring department, unchanged at 63. As the IRS expands its use of technology to simplify the taxpayer experience, overall satisfaction is expected to remain modest relative to other agencies given the inherent challenges of its tax collection role.

The General Services Administration, home to USA.gov, is one of two bright spots, up 1% to 73. Digital-first service delivery continues to resonate with citizens when agencies invest in it.

AMERICAN CUSTOMER SATISFACTION INDEX
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

ACSI (0-100 Scale)

DEPARTMENT/ INDEPENDENT AGENCY	HIGH IMPACT SERVICE PROVIDERS/ ACTIVITIES INCLUDED	2025 ACSI	2026 ACSI	% CHANGE
Department of State		75	77	3%
	Bureau of Consular Affairs			
Department of Agriculture		77	73	-5%
	Farm Service Agency Food and Nutrition Service Forest Service Natural Resources Conservation Service Recreation.gov Rural Development			
General Services Administration		72	73	1%
	USA.gov			
Department of Commerce		71	71	0%
	Census Bureau International Trade Administration Patent and Trademark Office			
Department of Homeland Security		73	71	-3%
	Customs and Border Protection Federal Emergency Management Agency Transportation Security Administration U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services			
Department of Veterans Affairs		71	71	0%
	Veterans Benefits Administration Veterans Health Administration			
Department of Housing and Urban Development		71	70	-1%
	Department of Housing and Urban Development			
Office of Personnel Management		71	70	-1%
	Retirement Services USAJOBS			

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AMERICAN CUSTOMER SATISFACTION INDEX

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES (CONTINUED)

ACSI (0-100 Scale)

DEPARTMENT/ INDEPENDENT AGENCY	HIGH IMPACT SERVICE PROVIDERS/ ACTIVITIES INCLUDED	2025 ACSI	2026 ACSI	% CHANGE
Department of War (Department of Defense)		72	69	-4%
	Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency (Federal Background Checks)			
Social Security Administration		70	69	-1%
	Social Security Administration			
Department of Education		70	68	-3%
	Federal Student Aid			
Department of Health and Human Services		70	67	-4%
	Administration for Children and Families Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Indian Health Service			
Small Business Administration		74	67	-9%
	Small Business Administration			
Department of Labor		68	66	-3%
	Employee Benefits Security Administration Employment and Training Administration Occupational Safety and Health Administration Office of Workers' Compensation Programs			
Department of the Treasury		63	63	0%
	Community Development Financial Institutions Fund Internal Revenue Service			

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Citizen Satisfaction Drivers

Each year, the ACSI federal government study examines four primary drivers of citizen satisfaction — attributes of citizen-perceived quality that cover the most relevant performance areas of government programs and services. All four decline in 2026.

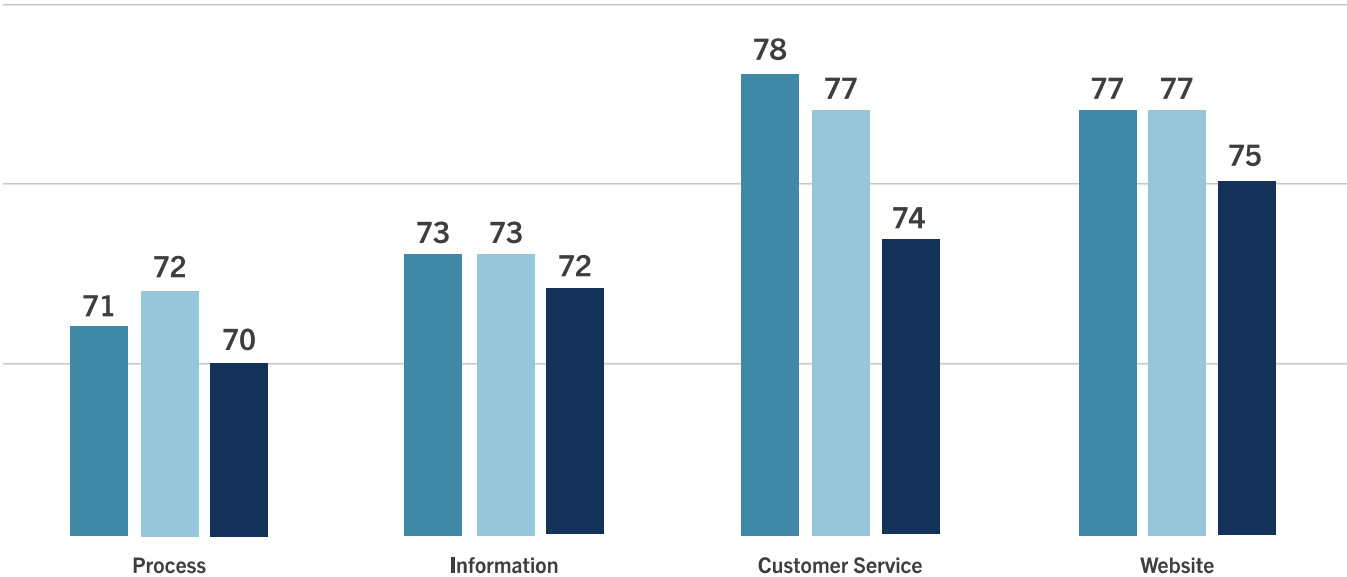
Customer service takes the largest hit, down 4% to 74. Websites slide 3% to 75. Process efficiency drops 3% to 70, and information from the federal government falls 1% to 72.

Federal agencies continue to expand AI and digital modernization efforts, but many initiatives remain in transition. Citizens are not yet seeing consistent improvements across key service areas.

AMERICAN CUSTOMER SATISFACTION INDEX FEDERAL GOVERNMENT Citizen Satisfaction Drivers

ACSI (0-100 Scale)

2024 2025 2026



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Citizen Satisfaction With Call Centers and Websites

The federal government call center experience was a success story last year. Not so much in 2026, with the call center satisfaction index sliding 3% to 63. The website satisfaction index also dips, down 1% to 71.

Technology advancements — callback systems and virtual agents — that had made call centers easier to navigate may not be scaling fast enough to keep pace with citizen expectations. Staffing pressures across agencies further strain these channels.

AMERICAN CUSTOMER SATISFACTION INDEX FEDERAL GOVERNMENT Call Centers and Websites

ACSI (0-100 Scale)

2026 2025

Website Satisfaction Index



Call Center Satisfaction Index



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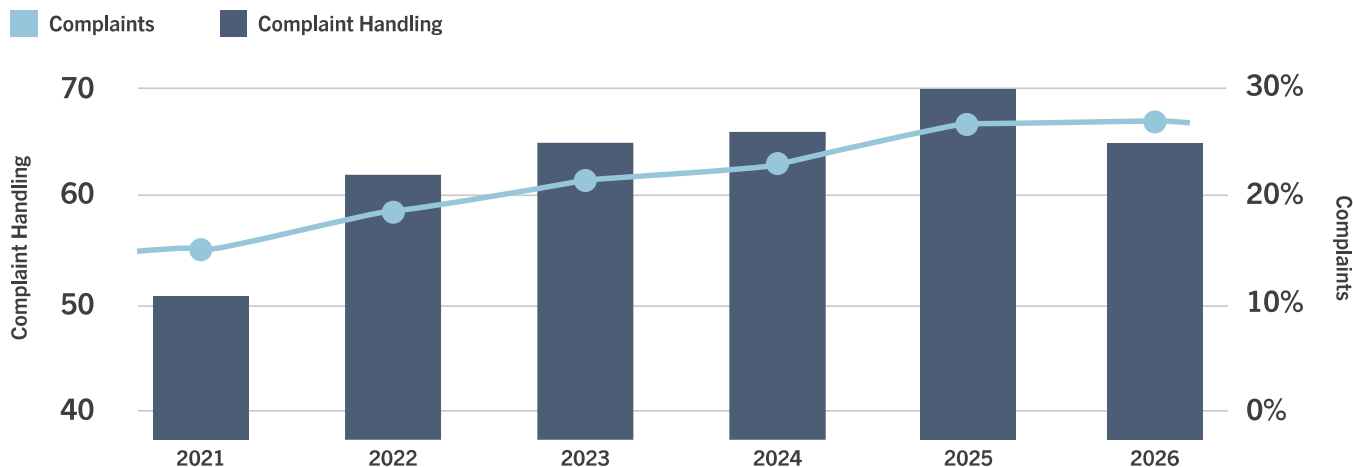
Federal Government Complaint Handling

The percentage of citizens who report a complaint remains approximately 27%, essentially unchanged from 2025. Complaint handling, however, is down 7% to 65.

The decline in complaint handling is not driven by a higher volume of complaints. Citizens who file complaints are less satisfied with how agencies handle or resolve their concerns. Complaint rates have risen steadily from 15% in 2021, but complaint handling had also been improving, from 51 in 2021 to 70 in 2025. This year's reversal in handling quality, while complaint volume remains flat, points to reduced resolution capacity rather than an influx of new complaints.

AMERICAN CUSTOMER SATISFACTION INDEX FEDERAL GOVERNMENT Complaints and Complaint Handling

ACSI (0-100 Scale)



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Citizen Satisfaction by Political Party Affiliation

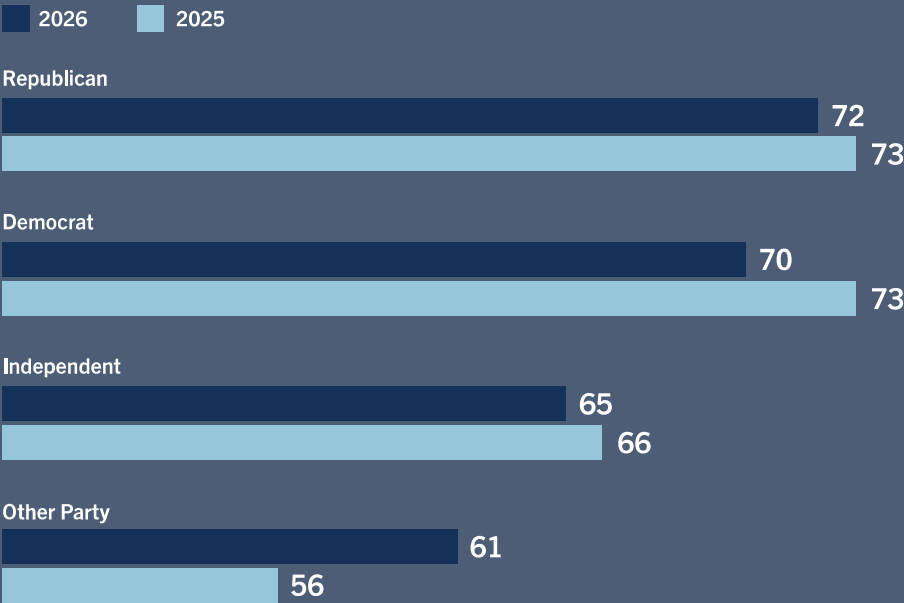
Satisfaction is lower across all three major political affiliations.

Democrats report the steepest decline, down 4% to 70. Republicans are down 1% to 72, and Independents are down 2% to 65.

The simultaneous decline across all three groups — weaker customer service and lower complaint resolution quality — is felt broadly rather than concentrated among any particular political constituency.

AMERICAN CUSTOMER SATISFACTION INDEX FEDERAL GOVERNMENT Citizen Satisfaction by Political Affiliation

ACSI (0-100 Scale)



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Citizen Trust in Government

The ACSI measures two dimensions of trust: trust in the federal government overall (broadly, how much citizens trust the government in Washington D.C.) and agency-specific trust (a combination of confidence that the agency will do a good job providing services and willingness to say positive things about the agency's work).

With government trust down 5% to 53 and agency-specific trust down 2% to 70, citizens clearly maintain substantially more confidence in the individual agencies they interact with than in the federal government as a whole.

Among the different generations, Boomers are the only generation where government trust holds effectively stable, edging up slightly to 43. Every other generation posts a decline, with the steepest drops among Gen Z, down 10% to 58, and Millennials, down 8% to 61. Those two generations remain the most trusting of the federal government overall, which makes their declines particularly notable.

Agency-specific trust follows a somewhat different pattern. Baby Boomers again stand apart — agency trust inches up slightly to 72. Gen Z holds at 67, and the Silent Generation holds at 66. Millennials and Gen X each post a 3% decline to 72 and 68, respectively.

As in prior years, declining confidence appears directed more at the federal government as an institution than at the quality of specific services citizens receive.

Methodology

The **ACSI Federal Government Study 2026** is based on 7,932 completed surveys. Respondents were chosen at random and contacted via email throughout the federal fiscal year ending in September 2026. Respondents are asked to evaluate their recent experiences with federal government services.

The survey data is used as inputs to ACSI's cause-and-effect econometric model, which estimates citizen satisfaction as the result of the survey-measured inputs of expectations and perceptions of the quality of government services. The ACSI model, in turn, links citizen satisfaction with the survey-measured outcomes of complaints and citizen trust in government. ACSI results are released throughout the year, with all measures reported on a scale of 0 to 100. ACSI government clients receive confidential agency and best-in-class data on all modeled variables.

About the ACSI

The American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI®) is a national economic indicator and a leading provider of customer analytics products that help organizations build lasting customer relationships and prove ROI on experience investments. ACSI's AI-enhanced platform delivers intuitive dashboards and cause-and-effect analytics that pinpoint the quality drivers most predictive of customer allegiance, retention, price tolerance, and financial performance. ACSI data has been shown to correlate strongly with key micro and macroeconomic indicators, including consumer spending, GDP growth, earnings, and stock returns.

Founded in 1994 at the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business, the ACSI measures customer satisfaction with more than 400 companies in over 40 industries, including federal government services, based on approximately 200,000 annual interviews.

Contact Information

If you are interested in scores for the HISPs not provided in this study, please contact sales@theacsi.com.

For more information regarding this study, visit www.theacsi.com or contact:

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